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SUBJECT: MALAWI: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES USG ASSISTANCE WITH MINISTER  
OF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND COOPERATION

¶1. (U) Summary: In a tour d'horizon of USG assistance with new Minister of Development Planning and Cooperation Abbie Shaba, the Ambassador noted that the U.S. has become the largest donor to Malawi. Minister Shaba noted the mutually supportive elements of the GOM's "Greenbelt Initiative" and the USG Global Hunger and Food Security initiative. He also committed to press his Cabinet colleagues on the need for family planning. End summary.

¶2. (U) The Ambassador met with new Minister of Development Planning and Cooperation Abbie Shaba on November 3 and provided an overview of past, current, and planned USG assistance programs. Outlining USG cooperation around the broad areas of health, education, economic growth, democracy and governance, and humanitarian assistance, the Ambassador highlighted the fact that the USG is now one of the largest donors in Malawi. He noted that USAID alone will provide over US\$ 115 million in development assistance in 2009, adding that these efforts are complimented by other USG agencies (State, CDC, Peace Corps, and USDA).

¶3. (U) Minister Shaba thanked the Ambassador for all the support the USG has provided Malawi over the years and assured the Ambassador that the collaboration between the USG and the GOM remains strong. Shaba noted in particular the strong support the USG has provided to assist the GOM in tackling the HIV/AIDS pandemic and malaria in Malawi.

¶4. (U) Highlighting the Global Hunger and Food Security Initiative (GHFS) and the Global Health Initiative (GHI), the Ambassador explained how these new programs could effectively support the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS). The Minister looked forward to discussing the details of these initiatives as they become available. He said that the GHFS Initiative was very much in line with the GOM's Greenbelt Initiative.

¶5. (U) The Ambassador briefed Minister Shaba on 1) the PEPFAR Partnership Framework and corresponding increase in funding levels and HIV/AIDS programming, and 2) the Presidential Malaria Initiative (PMI). He highlighted the progress in supporting the GOM's malaria drug program, the distribution of insecticide treated nets, and the indoor residual spraying campaign.

¶6. (U) The Ambassador emphasized the importance of family planning and reproductive health and how this issue affects all aspects of development in Malawi. He sought the Minister's support in addressing this important issue. The Minister promised to discuss the need to put more focus on family planning and reproductive health with his colleagues during the next cabinet meeting.

¶7. (U) The Ambassador also discussed the current status of the MCC Compact development process, highlighting the complementary actions needed from the GOM on structural reforms, including reform of the Electricity Supply Company of Malawi (ESCOM). The Minister indicated that he hoped that the MCC compact development process would be completed soon and expressed some frustration on the time it has taken to date.

## Comment

¶8. (SBU) Minister Shaba plays a central role in moving the GOM's development agenda forward. It was clear that he is well briefed on his portfolio and on US assistance programs in Malawi. We will nurture our working relationship with him to facilitate our program implementation.

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